

# THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**his management plan was prepared for the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary — one of two such sanctuaries in California. (The other site is the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary in southern California.) National marine sanctuaries are ocean areas protected and managed for their significant natural and cultural resources and human uses. Management generally consists of environmental education activities, research that focuses on marine issues, and better coordination among regulatory agencies. Management also increases protection of marine populations and habitats through monitoring and contingency planning.

The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 948 square nautical miles of near-shore and offshore waters of the eastern Pacific. The area was designated in 1981 in accordance with Title III of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act. This management plan is a means of ensuring that the activities planned for the sanctuary over the next ten years comply with the overall intent of the program and the objectives stated in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement* (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 1980) for the site's designation.





## Objectives

The plan updates the goals and objectives for the sanctuary as presented in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement* (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 1980). The improved protection of the marine environment and resources of the sanctuary is the general goal given highest priority. Compatible multiple use of the ocean area, increased public awareness and support, and a management-oriented research program are other important and complementary goals. In the plan, detailed objectives are provided for each goal which represent clear targets against which the success of the program can be evaluated.

## Sanctuary Environment and Resources

Located in the waters just north of San Francisco, the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary provides many examples of the marine life and habitats characteristic of the cold temperate waters of the eastern Pacific marine region that extends from Point Conception to British Columbia.

Most of the sanctuary lies in the Gulf of the Farallones between the western edges of the continental shelf and the coasts of Marin and Sonoma counties. Some of the largest and most diverse eastern Pacific populations of seabirds and pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) south of Alaska occur in the Gulf. Large flocks of Cassin's auklets, common murre, western gulls, and the endangered brown pelican feed on the small fish and crustaceans that are abundant in the surface waters of the sanctuary. These food resources also support California's largest breeding population of harbor seals and a rapidly growing population of northern elephant seals. Large numbers of whales and dolphins, including the California gray whale and the Pacific humpback whale population, are found in the area. There are many other significant nearshore habitats represented within the sanctuary such as the extensive wetlands of Tomales Bay and Bolinas Lagoon and the large intertidal and subtidal reef at Duxbury Reef. A complete spectrum of marine habitats ranging from the intertidal to the pelagic and deep oceanic environments can therefore be found within this sanctuary.

## Marine Uses

The sanctuary also illustrates how the ocean and its resources are important for the economic and social well-being of a region. The area supports many large commercial fisheries including a large percentage of San Francisco's bottom-trawling and salmon-trolling fleet. Sport fishing for salmon, rockfish, and other species is a very popular activity that generates revenue for the partyboat fleets operating out of San Francisco Bay, Half Moon Bay, and Bodega Bay. Whalewatching and offshore excursions are other uses of the sanctuary that are steadily growing in popularity. And of course, the sanctuary contains some of the west coast's busiest shipping lanes.



## Management Concerns

While the sanctuary continues to provide relatively undisturbed and natural habitats for marine life, recent observations and ongoing research indicate some changes that are of particular concern for sanctuary management. There is, for example, a need to better understand the long-term effects of potential accidental oil spills and chronic pollution of resources, since these are still poorly understood. Increasing numbers of seabirds and small cetaceans such as the harbor porpoise become entangled in gill nets, but the effects of this incidental take on populations are not known.

The plan identifies many other concerns or issues for sanctuary management such as the lack of public awareness of the site's existence and the need for greater coordination among the agencies that have jurisdiction within the area. These issues and others are the basis for an action plan that is organized into three program areas: resource protection, research, and interpretation and education.





## Resource Protection

The resource protection program addresses in a comprehensive manner the problems that have been affecting habitats or populations within the sanctuary in recent years. Specific measures include:

- a public information program aimed at disseminating marine resource regulations and policies including existing laws and guidelines mutually enforced by collaborating agencies;
- more effective and directed “on-the-water” surveillance and enforcement of regulations;
- procedures for a coordinated review and evaluation of policy revisions and/or proposed new activities and developments that could affect sanctuary resources;
- improved contingency planning and additional measures for emergency response to deal with accidental discharge of pollutants;
- development of a management-oriented information base that can be used for monitoring or as a readily accessible baseline for making policies.

## Research

Scientific research is encouraged at the sanctuary, particularly where research results can help resolve key management questions. The plan outlines general priorities for research for the next decade. These include:

- baseline studies for populations and habitats whose presence were critical in the sanctuary’s designation, yet whose distributions and other basic characteristics remain poorly understood;
- directed monitoring studies focusing on indicator species and representative habitats and undertaken jointly with other agencies;
- analytical studies aimed at determining the cause of a condition or impact (in a specific population for example).

The program includes additional procedures aimed at ensuring that research projects address management issues and that results are effectively integrated into the education and resource protection programs.

## Interpretation and Education

Environmental education and interpretative efforts at locations overlooking the sanctuary, within the sanctuary, and in the broader San Francisco Bay area are an important component of the plan. The aim is to develop a program that can lead to active and widespread public support.

The main activities included in the plan are as follows:

- design and production of high-quality printed materials such as brochures and posters that can be used for general program orientation and in public outreach;
- special sanctuary offshore excursions and coastal walks;
- lecture series and special field seminars;
- design and production of outdoor wayside panels to be located at points overlooking the sanctuary;
- design and production of exhibits and audio-visual presentations to be used in regional educational facilities;
- coverage in the local media and Bay Area promotional publications;
- investigating the need for an additional visitor facility.

The Marine and Estuarine Management Division will undertake many of these activities in collaboration with the extensive local network of private non-profit and public organizations that offer educational services in the San Francisco Bay area.

## Administration

The administration of the sanctuary is the responsibility of the Marine and Estuarine Management Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and its on-site staff. The Division coordinates activities, designs and implements programs, and determines priorities for education and research. The California Department of Fish and Game is the agency authorized to conduct on-site surveillance and enforcement within the sanctuary under an agreement with the Division. The National Park Service provides assistance to the Division in day-to-day administration, and developing and implementing the education program, on-site interpretation, and the research program.

The emergence of new issues may affect specific aspects of sanctuary management as described in this plan. However, the overall goals, management objectives, and guidelines will continue to be relevant and all actions will continue to be a step towards realizing the long-term resource protection goal. During the next few years, the aim is to carefully adjust the plan to changing circumstances and possibly expand it with new programs in light of the experience gained in actual management and with the support of other agencies and the public.





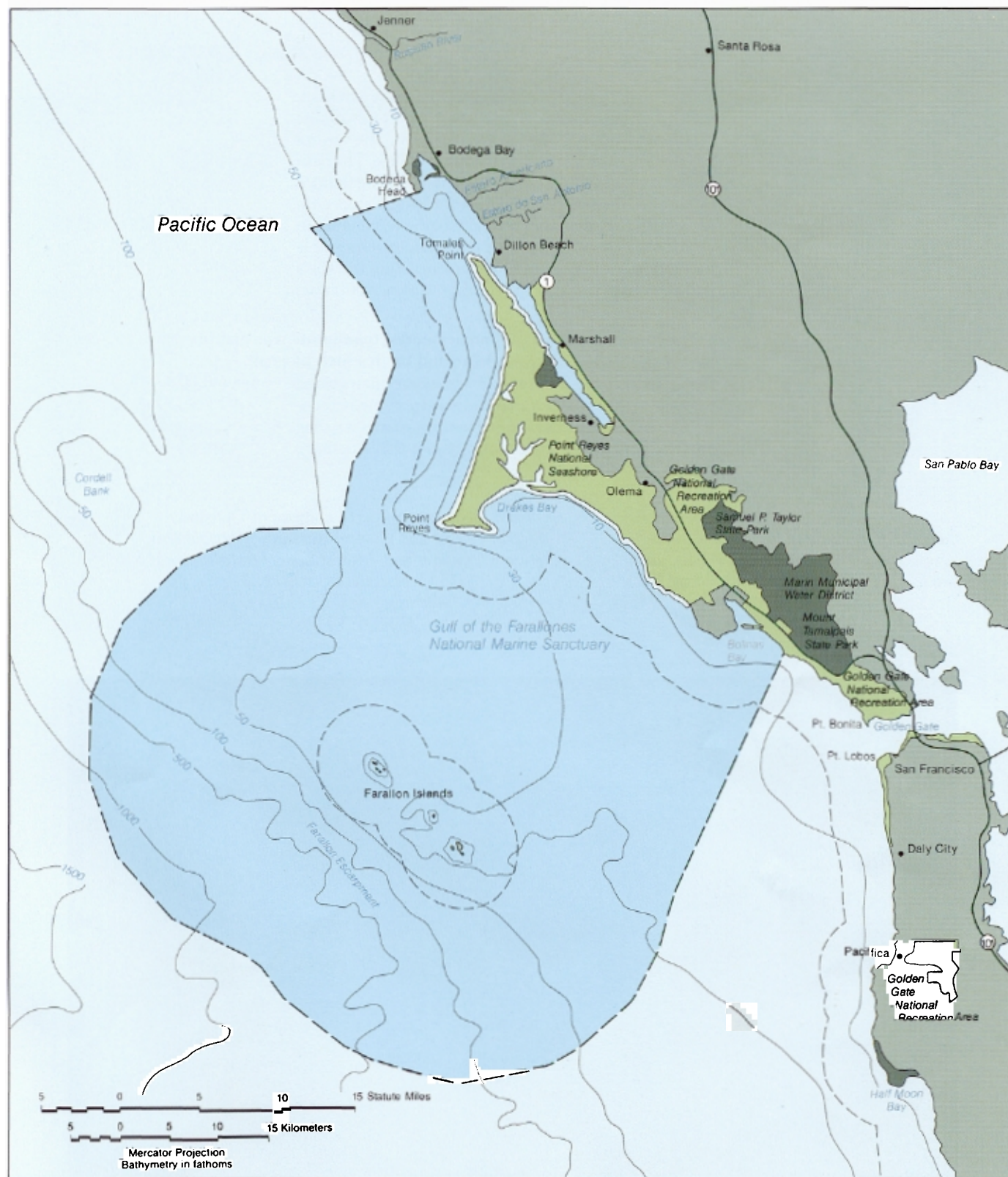


Figure 1

## Regional Context

### About this plan . . .

This management plan is designed to inform sanctuary users and the general public about the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and the various activities that are planned for the site over time. The *Final Environmental Impact Statement* and final regulations established the sanctuary boundary and regulatory controls, with the sanctuary formally being designated in 1981. This plan serves to guide the agencies responsible for sanctuary management in implementing the goals and objectives stated in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement*.

The National Marine Sanctuary Program is responsible for the review and periodic update of this plan so that it reflects the information and experience gained through sanctuary operations. Readers are invited to contribute their comments and suggestions to this ongoing process. For further information about the sanctuary, readers may contact:

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